

7

of the tongue 44 causes the hooking rib 52 to abut the rear sloping face 66 of the strip portion 62. As the insertion is continued, the hooking rib 52 is caused to slide upwardly along the sloping face 66 while the medial portion 50 is resiliently bent upwardly. The hooking rib 52 is thus guided along the surface of the strip portion 62 until the tongue 44 is fully inserted to allow the hooking rib 52 to snap-engage the edge 64 of the strip portion 62 (see FIG. 7). This engagement prevents forward displacement or undesired detachment of the deck 34 from the track base 26.

Meanwhile the overhang 70 is slightly twisted to manipulate the inner and outer engaging tabs 76 and 78 to receive in the gap "G" the horizontally extending peripheral edge of the cutout 74. By this means, the lug 72 snugly fits into the cutout 74 with the inner and outer engaging tabs 76 and 78 being positioned alongside the inside and outside surfaces of the side wall 28, respectively. Such an arrangement of the inner and outer tabs 76 and 78 is best shown in FIG. 10. This arrangement prevents both forward and lateral displacement of the upright wall 36 with respect to the side wall 28.

It will be recognized that many variations may be made to the foregoing within the scope of the present invention. For example, the track device of the invention may include three or more separately formed, longitudinally adjacent track members, wherein each pair of two adjacent track members are connected together through the locking means and/or the tongue-and-socket joint mentioned above. It should be also recognized that each of the first and second track members 24 and 22 may have a pair of side walls wherein the side walls of the first member 24 are connected respectively to the side walls of the second member 22 through the locking means.

It should be further recognized that the present invention may be incorporated into a shelf unit wherein multiple first track members are molded together in a side-by-side, longitudinally adjacent relationship and so are multiple second track members. An example of such a variation is illustrated in FIGS. 11-14 wherein a plurality of track bodies 90 are molded together so that the respective track bases 92 are joined together through side walls 94. A plurality of front pieces 96 are also molded together so that the respective decks 98 are joined together and the respective upper stopper elements 100 are joined together in series. Each pair of a body 90 and a front piece 96 employs a tongue 102 and a socket virtually equal to the tongue and the socket described in the foregoing embodiment. However, the locking means used in this embodiment is different from the one in the foregoing embodiment. As shown in FIG. 14, the locking means includes an outer engaging tab 104 depending from the lug 106 and an inner engaging tab 108 extending rearward from a ledge 110 that is formed on the inside surface of the respective upright wall 112. When the front pieces 96 are attached to the bodies 90, the rear end of the ledge 110 is brought into abutment with the forward end of the associated side wall 94, and the inner tab 108 is located alongside the inside surface of the side wall 94.

What is claimed is:

1. A merchandising track device for displaying articles, said track device comprising:

first and second elongate track members formed separately as two discrete structures, said first and second members being connected together in an end-to-end, longitudinally adjacent relationship, each of said members comprising a track base for carrying articles for sliding movement along said each member, and at least one article-guiding side wall upstanding from said track base of said each member and extending along said

8

each member, said one side wall of said first member being disposed in general longitudinal alignment with said one side wall of said second member and including a portion extending upwardly above an upper edge of said one side wall of said second member, said one side wall of said second member having a cutout opening to said upper edge thereof and to opposite side surfaces thereof;

locking means integrally formed with said first member for interconnecting said one side wall of said first member and said one side wall of said second member to lock said members in position relative to each other, said locking means comprising a flexible overhang extending rearward from said portion of said one side wall of said first member and disposed over said upper edge of said one side wall of said second member, said flexible overhang engages side of said one side wall of said second member with a lug formed integrally with said overhang and received in said cutout, whereby longitudinal displacement of said one side wall of said first member relative to said one side wall of said second member is prevented; and

a pair of engaging tabs provided disposed respectively alongside said opposite side surfaces of said one side wall of said second member with at least one of said engaging tabs formed on said lug so that lateral displacement of said one side wall of said first member relative to said one side wall of said second member is prevented.

2. A merchandising track device for displaying articles, said track device comprising:

an elongate body having a forward end, said body comprising a track base for carrying a row of articles for sliding movement along said body, a tongue extending forwardly from said track base and defining said forward end of said body, and at least one article-guiding side wall upstanding from said track base and extending along said body;

a front piece formed as a discrete structure separate from said body and attached to said forward end of said body to provide a stopper for preventing a leading article in said row from exiting said track device, said front piece comprising a deck for supporting said leading article, at least one upright wall upstanding from said deck and disposed in general longitudinal alignment with said one side wall, said one upright wall including a portion extending upwardly above an upper edge of said one sidewall; and locking means for interconnecting said one upright wall and said one side wall to lock said front piece in position relative to said body, said locking means including a flexible overhang integrally formed with said front piece and extending rearward from said portion of said one upright wall and disposed over said upper edge of said one side wall with said flexible overhang flexing to either side of said one side wall of said second member; and

a pair of engaging tabs disposed respectively alongside opposite side surfaces of said one side wall, at least one of said engaging tabs being integrally formed with said overhang, whereby lateral displacement of said one upright wall relative to said one side wall is prevented, and wherein one sidewall has a cutout opening to said upper edge and said opposite side surface thereof, and at least one engaging tab is formed on a lug to engage in said cutout.

3. The track device according to claim 2, wherein said lug has a thickness greater than a thickness of said one side wall, and both said engaging tabs are formed on said lug.

4. The track device according to claim 2, wherein said tongue is provided with a hooking element projecting therefrom, and said deck has a strip portion having a front and rear opposed faces, said front face providing an edge for engaging said hooking element to prevent forward displacement of said front piece with respect to said body, said rear face sloping to facilitate insertion of said tongue into said socket.

5. The track device according to claim 4, wherein said engaging edge of said deck extends transversely of said body.

6. The track device according to claim 5, wherein said strip portion is provided by said lower wall and extends transversely of said body, said rear face of said strip portion sloping downwardly and rearwardly, said hooking element projecting downwardly from a lower surface of said tongue.

7. The track device according to claim 4, wherein said tongue is formed with at least one notch for dividing said tongue into plural portions so that one of said plural portions exhibits substantial flexibility, and said one of said plural portions is provided with said hooking element.

8. The track device according to claim 2, wherein said engaging tabs are disposed with a lateral gap therebetween to receive in said gap an edge of said one sidewall.

9. The track device according to claim 8, wherein said engaging tabs are opposed to each other across a thickness of said one side wall.

10. The track device according to claim 8, wherein said engaging tabs are disposed at positions offset from each other along a length of said one side wall.

11. The track device according to claim 2, wherein said body and said front piece are formed from different material.

12. The track device according to claim 11, wherein said body is molded of polystyrene, and said front piece is molded of polycarbonate.

13. The track device according to claim 2, wherein said tongue is formed with at least one notch for dividing said tongue into plural portions so that one of said plural portions exhibits substantial flexibility, and said one of said plural portions is provided with said hooking element.

14. A merchandising track device for displaying articles, said track device comprising:

first and second elongate track members formed separately as two discrete structures, said first and second members being connected together in an end-to-end, longitudinally adjacent relationship, each of said members comprising a track base for carrying articles for sliding movement along said each member, and at least one article-guiding side wall upstanding from said track base of said each member and extending along said each member, said one side wall of said first member being disposed in general longitudinal alignment with said one side wall of said second member and including a portion extending upwardly above an upper edge of said one side wall of said second member, said one side wall of said second member having a cutout opening to said upper edge thereof and to opposite side surfaces thereof;

said second member comprising a tongue extending longitudinally from said track base of said second member, said tongue defining an end of said second member, said first member having an end-opening socket for receiving said tongue so that said track bases of said first and second members are interconnected, said tongue being formed on said track base of said second member such that an upper surface of said tongue is disposed below an upper surface of said track base of

said second member to allow said upper surface of said track base of said second member and an upper surface of said track base of said first member to form a continuous floor for slidably supporting said articles, wherein said track base of said first member comprises upper and lower opposed walls, and said socket is defined between said upper and lower walls; and

locking means integrally formed with said first member for interconnecting said one side wall of said first member and said one side wall of said second member to lock said members in position relative to each other, said locking means comprising a flexible overhang extending rearward from said portion of said one side wall of said first member and disposed over said upper edge of said one side wall of said second member with said flexible overhang flexing to either side of said one side wall of said second member, and a lug with tabs formed integrally with and extending from said overhang and received in said cutout, whereby longitudinal displacement of said one side wall of said first member relative to said one side wall of said second member is prevented.

15. The track device according to claim 14, wherein said tongue is provided with a hooking element projecting therefrom, and said track base of said first member has a strip portion having a front and rear opposed faces, said front face providing an edge for engaging said hooking element to prevent longitudinal displacement of said first member with respect to said second member, said rear face sloping to facilitate insertion of said tongue into said socket.

16. A merchandising track device for displaying articles, said track device comprising:

an elongate body having a forward end, said body comprising a track base for carrying a row of articles for sliding movement along said body, a tongue extending forwardly from said track base and defining said forward end of said body, and at least one article-guiding side wall upstanding from said track base and extending along said body; and

a front piece formed as a discrete structure separate from said body and attached to said forward end of said body to provide a stopper for preventing a leading article in said row from exiting said track device, said front piece comprising a deck for supporting said leading article, said deck having a socket for receiving said tongue so that said deck and said track base are interconnected, said tongue being formed on said track base such that an upper surface of said tongue is disposed below an upper surface of said track base to allow said upper surface of said track base and an upper surface of said deck to form a continuous floor for slidably supporting said articles, at least one upright wall upstanding from said deck and disposed in general longitudinal alignment with said one side wall, said one upright wall including a portion extending upwardly above an upper edge of said one sidewall; and locking means integrally formed with said front piece for interconnecting said one upright wall with said one side wall to lock said front piece in position relative to said body, said locking means including a flexible overhang extending rearward from said portion of said one upright wall and disposed over said upper edge of said one side wall having said cutout, said flexible overhang flexing to either side of said one side wall of said second member; and

a pair of engaging tabs disposed respectively alongside opposite side surfaces of said one side wall in a cutout

11

with at least one of said engaging tabs being integrally formed with said overhang so that lateral displacement of said one upright wall relative to said one side wall is prevented.

17. The track device according to claim 16, wherein said tongue is provided with a hooking element projecting therefrom, and said deck has a strip portion having front and

12

rear opposed faces, said front face providing an edge for engaging said hooking element to prevent forward displacement of said front piece with respect to said body, said rear face sloping to facilitate insertion of said tongue into said socket.

\* \* \* \* \*